

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method for enabling a caller to locate a called party using a computer system comprising:  
providing a contact list manager (10) in which a called party can store a list (22) of two or more  
contacts; and  
upon receiving a request to locate a called party, referring to said contact list to automatically  
attempt to locate said called party.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein said contact list manager further comprises:  
one or more contact methods (22a) for each contact; and  
one or more rules (24a) applicable to contacts and contact methods regarding when or how to send  
a locator request.
3. A method according to claim 1 wherein said one or more contact methods is one or more  
methods selected from the group consisting of:  
one or more telephone numbers,  
one or more fax numbers,  
one or more pager numbers,  
one or more cell phone numbers, and  
one or more e-mail addresses.
4. A method according to claim 2 wherein said contact list database stores additional contact  
information designating the conditions for usage of said contacts or said contact methods.
5. A method according to claim 2 wherein said automatically attempting to locate said called  
party comprises:  
automatically sending one or more messages to parties listed in a contact list requesting location  
information regarding said called party.  
receiving responses to said one or more messages and presenting a response to a calling party; and  
canceling outstanding messages when a response is received.
6. A method for a locating a called party comprising:  
receiving a request to locate a called party; and  
automatically sending one or more messages to parties listed in a contact list requesting location  
information regarding said called party.
7. The method according to claim 6 further comprising:  
allowing a called party to configure said contact list.

sub-a3> 8. The method according to claim 6 further comprising:  
receiving responses to said one or more messages and presenting a response to a calling party; and  
canceling outstanding messages when a response is received.

5 9. A method according to claim 6 wherein a called party is identified and identities of called parties are used in part to determine system behavior.

10. A method according to claim 6 wherein said called party may configure system behavior for a calling party.

11. A method according to claim 6 wherein said messages are predetermined prior to receiving said request.

10 12. A method according to claim 6 wherein the parties on the contact list may submit responses to said messages with information regarding the called party.

13. A method according to claim 12 wherein:  
the calling party is automatically notified of said responses.  
said responses contain a contact method for reaching the called party.  
the called party may cancel the called party location process at any time including automatically canceling, expiring and/or recalling all dispatched messages.

14. A method according to claim 6 wherein said messages may be automatically cancelled expired or recalled based on a timer.

Sub C1 20 15. A method according to claim 6 wherein said messages may be automatically cancelled, expired or recalled based on the successful establishment of a contact between said calling party and said called party.

sub-a5> 25 16. An apparatus for automatically locating a called party comprising:  
a contact list manager (10) in which a called party can store a list (22) of two or more contacts;  
a configuration interface (18);  
a locator (60) capable of sending out location request messages and receiving and handling responses.

17. An apparatus according to claim 16 further comprising:  
one or more contact lists (22) associated with one or more called parties; and  
one or more rule sets (24) associated with one or more called parties.

18. An apparatus according to claim 16 further comprising:  
one or more system or group contact lists (12) providing contacts that are applicable to more than  
one called party; and  
one or more system or group rule sets (14) applicable to more than one called party.

5 19. An apparatus according to claim 16 further comprising:  
an interface for receiving one or more responses (64) to location requests; and  
an presentation module (65) for presenting responses to a caller.

20. An apparatus according to claim 16 further comprising:  
a cancellation module (66) for determining when to cancel outstanding messages and sending  
10 cancellation requests.

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